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# **News Release**

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## **Two Operation Xcellerator defendants are sentenced**

During a 21-month nationwide law enforcement investigation that ended in early 2009, 750 people were arrested on narcotics-related charges. The collaborative investigative effort, known as Operation Xcellerator, targeted the Sinaloa Cartel, a major Mexican drug-trafficking organization. Thirty-six of the individuals arrested during that operation were indicted in U.S. District Court in Minnesota.

On Nov. 12 in Minneapolis, two of those people appeared before U.S. District Court Judge David Doty for sentencing. George Marvin Chute, 27, St. Paul, was sentenced to 140 months in federal prison, while Dustin Thomas Swanda, 28, St. Paul, was ordered to serve 151 months. Both men previously pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute in excess of 50 grams of methamphetamine. In entering their pleas, the defendants admitted that between January 2006 and February 2009, they conspired with others to distribute between 50 and 150 grams of methamphetamine.

According to documents on file with the court, the Sinaloa Cartel is responsible for bringing into the U.S. tons of illegal drugs from Mexico through a network of distribution cells in the U.S. and Canada. The Cartel also is believed to be responsible for laundering millions of dollars in criminal proceeds from drug trafficking activities. Chute and Swanda were involved in distribution cells that moved illegal drugs, primarily cocaine and methamphetamine, into Minnesota from Mexico and Canada. The drugs were transported by private automobiles, commercial buses, commercial airplanes, and private and commercial trucks. The Minnesota cells took in approximately \$3.5 million during each month of operation.

In addition to the arrests of 750 people nationwide, Operation Xcellerator resulted in the seizure of approximately \$59.1 million in U.S. currency as well as more than 12,000 kilograms

of cocaine, 16,000 pounds of marijuana, 1,200 pounds of methamphetamine, eight kilograms of heroin, and approximately 1.3 million in ecstasy pills along with vehicles, aircraft, weapons, and maritime vessels, including a submarine.

Here in Minnesota, the investigations collectively known as Operation Xcellerator were conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the St. Paul Police Department, the Minneapolis Police Department, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and the Northwest Metro Drug Task Force. The case against Chute and Swanda was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christian S. Wilton.

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